

NO

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# DOMINION ELECTION.

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CAMPAIGN OF 1886.

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## Hon. Edward Blake's Speeches.

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No. 11 (First Series).

## PROHIBITION AND POLITICS.

NOTE.—See Inside Cover for List of Mr. Blake's Speeches in first Series. Apply to W. T. R. Preston, Reform Club, Toronto, for Copies of these Speeches.

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## PROHIBITION AND POLITICS.

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Hon. EDWARD BLAKE, after some preliminary remarks, at Aylmer, said :—

I desire, before entering upon a discussion of party political questions, to trouble you with a few words with reference to a question upon which I have been anxious for some time to say something, but that no favourable occasion arose. I do not say that this is a specially favourable opportunity for the purpose, because what I was anxious to find was an occasion upon which no topic of party controversy would arise. But I see such an opportunity is not likely to be found in view of the nearness of the Provincial election, and of the season of the year, and having seen that to be the case, and having found also that the Dominion Alliance had a few days ago stated what its programme and platform are, and recommended them for the adoption of those who are enrolled in its ranks, I have thought I would not lose the chance of speaking to my first audience after that time, and saying a few words to them upon

### THE TEMPERANCE QUESTION.

(Loud applause.) But I have to talk upon other topics, and that compels me to compress my remarks. There is no time to enlarge upon reasons or arguments. I must almost confine myself to stating facts and conclusions. This is not very satisfactory to me; perhaps will not be so to you. It may seem dogmatic; it may tend to some misconceptions; but it is inevitable under the circumstances. Why is it that I had desired to discuss this subject unconnected altogether with any discussion at that time of party political topics? It is in the interest of the cause itself on which I am about now to touch. This is

### NOT AT THIS TIME A PARTY QUESTION.

How do the political parties of Canada stand upon it? The Liberal party embraces, I have no doubt, the majority of the Temperance Reformers and Prohibitionists, and for that I refer you not merely to the strong and active temperance Reformers throughout the land, but to the Parliamentary record of the Liberal representatives at Ottawa. (Cheers.) I shall not go over the votes; I suppose they are familiar to you all. But although that is the position of the Liberal party in that regard, it still includes many

sober, virtuous, temperate, Christian men who have not yet seen it their duty to become total abstainers themselves or to support laws to force either themselves or their neighbours to abstain. The Tory party embraces the majority of the anti-temperance workers and anti-prohibitionists, and it embraces the great bulk of the liquor interest. (Applause.) For that I refer you to what you know in your own locality, and also once again to the parliamentary record. I

#### REFER YOU TO THE RECORD OF THE VOTES

in Parliament in both branches of the Legislature. In the House of Commons, springing from the people, trace the votes of the Conservatives and those of the Reformers; and in the Senate, where you see the result of eight years of Tory rule with reference to a body in which they have had the opportunity of making some sixty or seventy appointments, if I am rightly informed, and have made it a most decidedly and emphatically anti-temperance and anti-prohibitionist assembly. That has been their own work; it is their own child, their offspring, and it speaks for itself. (Great applause.) Now, amongst the Ministry itself—those who lead the Tory party of to-day—you find one of the greatest of the brewers of Canada, and one of the greatest of the spirit sellers of Canada, and some very liberal consumers of the commodities which are made and dispensed by their colleagues. (Loud laughter and applause.) And so it is with the rank and file. But that party contains a certain number—a considerable number, though a minority—of the strong temperance men and prohibitionists as well. Now, the Conservative Government, through the various Ministers, from the First Minister down, down, down to Mr. Foster—(loud laughter)—has declared that this is not and

#### CANNOT BE MADE A PARTY QUESTION.

That is their attitude, and I admit that it seems absolutely impossible for them. I believe it would be the greatest example—the most gigantic example—of organized hypocrisy this world has ever seen or known. (Applause.) So much for that. Now, with reference to the Liberal party. Would it be possible for us to make it a party question at this time? I believe not. (Applause.) And this for several reasons, some affecting the cause and some affecting the party, and affecting the party in the sense in which we may honestly and properly declare that we desire to consider the interests of the party, regarding the party not as an end but as a means, as a great instrument for effecting the public good and promoting good government through the land; as an instrument whose efficiency and capacity for these great objects we are bound

to preserve, and if possible to advance. Now, first of all, it would drive out of our ranks many good and sober men who, as I have said, do not yet see eye to eye with others of us on this particular question. I hope that time

#### MAY SOON INDUCE A CHANGE OF VIEW

with many of them. I believe our present attitude favours such a change, and I am quite sure that expulsion would not tend to produce such a change at all, but the reverse. Then it would not bring to our ranks the honest temperance Tories. They believe in Sir John Macdonald, Mr. John Carling, and Mr. Frank Smith. They believe in the general policy of the Government. They are opposed to us on all the general questions of the day. If honest men they cannot sacrifice their convictions on all these questions, and, therefore, they cannot co-operate with us upon them. If dishonest men, we don't want them. (Loud and prolonged applause.) Then again, it would render impossible the conduct of the business of the country under the system of party organization, without providing any substitute for that system whatever. Then as to the cause. I conscientiously believe it would not advance the cause; on the contrary, in my belief it would retard it. (Applause.) The cause would be weaker now and would be weaker later, and by introducing the bitterness and nearly equal divisions of party into this special controversy, the chance of passing and afterwards of maintaining a law, which more than any other law I know of requires a very general assent, would be indefinitely postponed. But anyway, whatever may be desirable, it is not now a party question. It is a question

#### ON WHICH REFORMERS AGREE TO DIFFER,

on which each one acts on his own judgment. I speak for myself and for myself alone. I express the view of no other man.

#### I DECLINE POSITIVELY

from my notions of public duty to assist in any way at this time to make this a party question. *I have endeavoured, and shall continue to endeavour, to win every man, Reformer or Tory, to my temperance opinions by argument and by example.* But I shall neither drive away from my side of general politics Reformers who do not think with me on temperance and prohibition questions, nor shall I refuse on temperance and prohibition questions to co-operate with Tories who oppose me on general politics. (Cheers.) I will act with all, I will do my best for the promotion



of my views, ostracising no man because he differs from me on this question, and refusing no man's help because he differs from me on all the others. (Cheers.)

#### NOW FOR MY INDIVIDUAL VIEWS.

Always strictly temperate, thirteen years ago I came to see the evils to Canada of the drinking habit so strongly that I felt it my duty to do all I could to end that habit. And I thought *the first step was to become a total abstainer myself*, and I did so. (Loud cheers.) I claim no merit at all for that act. It happened to be a very trifling sacrifice to me. Since that time, by precept and example, by voice and by vote, I have always supported what I thought to be the true interests of temperance. (Cheers.) I have long believed that the greatest boon to the people of Canada would be that we should become a nation of total abstainers. (Renewed applause.) To achieve that result I would gladly, even were I as anxious to retain as I am to quit the position I occupy, surrender it to-morrow. But now as to the means. I believe the main factor must be the formation of an enlightened, a very widely diffused, and a very strong public opinion, under which many more of our good men, our sober, virtuous, and God-fearing citizens, not now total abstainers, shall be made to see so clearly the evils of drink to the community, and their personal duty in the matter, that they shall, in the general interest, become themselves total abstainers, and having so become, shall endeavour to persuade others to follow their example and thus very largely reinforce the ranks of the voluntary abstainers. In this respect great progress has been made—I recognize it thankfully—but much more remains to be done, and if we slacken in this work and hope to save trouble to ourselves by other and wholesale and involuntary methods, we shall make the greatest mistake conceivable. (Applause.) I think no repressive legislation can be profitable or permanent unless there exists a widely-diffused and very strongly-felt and

#### VERY EARNEST PUBLIC OPINION

at its back. The tone and quality of this opinion are of as much or more consequence than its quantity. It is not from fear of the criminal law that the bulk of the community abstains from crime. The bulk would abstain if there were no criminal law. The conscience of the community would be its law. Laws generally derive their binding effect from this consideration. But for that, even though directed against a few only, they would be of little use. This view has very special application to legislation upon the subject of the general social customs of the people. It follows, then,

that it is only this widely-diffused and strongly-felt public opinion which can be properly crystallized into law, and that premature attempts will be abortive failures. Thus conditions of opinion may exist at various epochs of progress under which, usefully, licenses may be required to sell under which high license may replace low license, under which restricted license may replace freer license, under which local and partial prohibition may replace high and restricted license, and under which general prohibition may replace local and partial prohibition. But in deciding on the legislation to be at any particular time adopted, we must determine whether the country is at that time

#### RIPE FOR THE LEGISLATION ;

whether it is reasonable to conclude that it will be enforced and maintained, else we hurt instead of helping the cause. Now, as to legislative and executive action, I am against the emasculation of the Temperance Act, which I believe to be in contemplation at this hour. (Cheers.) I am for the amendment of that Act in those details in which experience has shown defects, preventing a fair test of its principles. I believe it is the duty of the Government of the day, finding this law upon the Statute Book, to determine whether it shall be repealed or made effective ; I believe that if they do not choose to repeal it they are bound to make it effective, and if they neglect dealing with the case they neglect their plain and obvious duty. (Loud cheers.) I am for

#### A FAIR AND FULL TRIAL OF THE ACT

in the localities in which it is in force, with all the aid that executive action can properly afford. And here I may point out that the case Mr. Mowat states with reference to the Dominion functions is much stronger than he put it, because, if I rightly understand it, the Temperance Act itself contains a clause providing that the Collector of Inland Revenue, a Dominion officer, may bring prosecutions, and that it shall be the duty of the Collector of Inland Revenue to act on informations and bring these prosecutions. (Loud applause.) I am for putting down with a stern hand the dynamite and other outrages, and the terrorism which has disgraced some places in this connection. (Great cheering.) I am for or against the submission of the Act in new localities, according as there is or is not a fair prospect in the condition of local opinion that it will be reasonably efficacious. (Applause.) It is on this consideration that I myself would vote in case it were submitted in a county in which I had a vote. I am against the submission of the Act as a mere test of public opinion, by a vote



in the nature of a plebiscite on prohibition, without a firm determination to work it thoroughly if passed. I consider the

#### TEMPERANCE ACT ITSELF IS ON ITS TRIAL.

I have been anxiously watching its operation in that view, as also to use it as one test, whether there yet exists in Canada such a tone and quality of public opinion as would render further legislation efficacious and permanent. This I regard as a much better test than the mere vote at the polls. I cannot say I think the test as yet justifies the proposed legislation. I am glad to say that in many places the Scott Act is working fairly, while in some cases the results are hardly known, and in some the results are not favourable. But I notice that large numbers of our citizens, good, sober, virtuous, and exemplary, are as yet unconvinced as to the duty of total abstinence themselves, and therefore unfit to enforce it upon others. I find many supporters of temperance legislation who do not look upon drinking, even in Scott Act counties, as a crime, and who refuse that moral support, and help to the enforcement of that law which they give to the general criminal law.

#### JUST COMPARE THINGS.

Suppose one of us is walking along the street behind a neighbour, a friend, or a stranger, and see his pocket being picked. He makes himself a special police constable at once, tries to prevent the crime, and, if he is big enough, arrests the criminal. But supposing, in a Scott Act county, we pass an unlicensed house—for they are all unlicensed, no licenses being granted—and see some one going in and getting drink, we turn to the other side; we say nothing about that; we do not propose to enforce the law; we do not give the same support, the same sympathy, the same active investigation in the case of this law as is given in the other case. Now if that be the condition of the more advanced localities, what is the condition in the other parts of Canada? I have no sympathy whatever with the abuse sometimes poured out on those honest men, who, not themselves in any sense slaves to drink, are not yet convinced of the duty of total abstinence. There are amongst these many better men than some of those who abuse them. (Cheers.)

#### INTEMPERANCE IN DRINK IS NOT THE ONLY VICE,

and there are things much worse at any rate than moderate drinking. Unfortunate as I believe the habit, there are many better men than myself who honestly differ from me, who have not seen what I think the light in this matter, and their eyes will not be en-

lightened or their ears be opened by abuse; they will be only closed and darkened. I am ready to try and persuade, but I am not ready to abuse them. Let us endeavour in all loving kindness to win them to our views. This is our most important and most pressing work. Until progress is made in that, I am not of the opinion that Canada is ripe for prohibition. (Cheers.) *I do not believe that the law, if carried, would, in the present condition, be useful or permanent.* I remember very well the speech made by Sir Leonard Tilley, that veteran champion of temperance—made not very long before he retired from Parliament—in which he declared as the result of his long experience, his experience in his own Province, confirmed by all that he had learned elsewhere—an opinion which pointed out the absolute necessity, in order that there might be an efficacious and permanent law, for that

#### STRONG AND WIDELY-DIFFUSED PUBLIC OPINION

to which I refer, and I observe that even the *Mail* newspaper, in the article in which it declared its new confession of faith—(cheers and laughter)—when, with all the fervour of the neophyte, with all the zeal of the convert, you might have expected it would out-Herod Herod, or, as people sometimes say, meaning the same thing, been more Catholic than the Pope—declared itself in these words:—“So vast and momentous a change is not to be accomplished in a hurry. Public opinion has to be moulded and hardened, and more than a majority of the people brought to the conviction that drink is a direct outrage and irredeemable curse which ought to be outlawed from among men. This is a formidable task.” Therefore I cannot honestly vote for prohibition now. I can give no pledge for such a vote at any definite time. Should the time arrive when I think the law would be useful and permanent instead of hurtful, I will vote for it, whatever the political results to myself. Until that time comes

#### I SHALL VOTE AGAINST IT,

whatever those results may be. (Loud cheers). Let me point out to you here that there is a large constitutional question involved in prohibition; there is the question of the reform of the Senate, for just so long as you maintain the Senate as at present constituted and composed, just so long there is an absolute and inseparable barrier to your obtaining prohibitory legislation. (Loud applause.) There are also two financial questions which, though subordinate, are each important enough to refer to, First is the question of revenue. I think the prosperity resultant from the disuse of intoxicating liquors would in time restore very largely the loss from the duties. But there would be a temporary and serious disturbance to be faced, and the present condition of enormous expen-

ditures, high taxation, and large deficits is unfavourable to immediate action. Next, I think that there are certain permanent interests existing under the protection of the law, in respect of which justice demands that compensation on a limited principle should accompany their legislative extinction. But I think this demand ought not to prevent the passing of the law, if the general good requires it. In that case the law should be passed and the compensation provided. I dare say the views I have now expressed will not please the extremists of either party. I cannot help it. It is my duty to give my fellow-countrymen my honest advice and take the consequences. That advice I have given and those consequences I am prepared to face. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

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